

# MYTHS OF ENKI



## ENKI BUILDS THE E-ENGURRA

Source: [Kramer, Samuel Noah \(1988\) Sumerian Mythology](#), University of Pennsylvania Press, West Port, Connecticut.

*Myth that tells how Enki built a house (temple) for himself in Eridu, the oldest city in Sumer according to tradition, the first of five cities founded before the Great Flood. The temple, decorated with silver, lapis lazuli, carnelian and gold, was established on the bank of a river, where its foundations reached deep into the underground sweet, fertilising waters, called the apsu. The temple had magical qualities: the brickwork gave Enki advice, while the surrounding reed fences roared like a bull. The roof-beam was shaped like the bull of heaven, and a lion gripping a man formed the gateway. The overall effect was described as a lusty bull. The bustle of activity there was compared to the drama of a river rising during a flood, Enki filled the building with lyres, drums and every other kind of musical instruments. Surrounding the temple was a delightful garden full of fruit trees, with birds singing all around and frolicking carp playing among the reeds in the streams. After finishing the construction of the E-engurra, the temple, Enki called up the beat of the ala and the uh drums and set out by barge to Nippur, in order to receive the other gods' blessings. The fish danced before him on the way to Nippur, and Enki slaughtered several oxen and sheep for the feast to come. Once in Nippur, Enki started preparing the feast. Paying attention to protocol, Anu was at the head of the group, with Enlil beside him and the goddess Nintu in a seat of honour nearby. In the happy celebration that followed, all the great gods pronounced blessings on Enki's new home, and Anu stated: "My son Enki has made his temple.... grow from the ground like a mountain".*

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After the water of creation had ben decreed,  
After the name hegal (*abundance*) born in heaven,  
Like plant and herb had clothed the land,  
The lord of the abyss, the king Enki,  
Enki the Lord who decrees the fates,  
Built his house of silver and lapis lazuli;  
Its silver and lapis lazuli, like sparkling light,  
The father fashioned fittingly in the abyss.  
The creatures of bright countenances and wise, coming forth from the abyss,  
Stood all about the lord Nudimmud;  
The pure house he built  
He ornamented it greatly with gold,  
In Eridu he built the house of water-bank,  
Its brickwork, word-uttering, advice-giving,  
Its... like an ox roaring,  
The house of Enki, the oracles uttering.

*(Follows a long passage in which Isimud, Enki's counsellor/prime minister, sings the praises of the sea-house. Then Enki raises the city of Eridu from the abyss and makes it float over the water like a lofty mountain. Its green fruit-bearing gardens he fills with birds; fishes too he makes abundant. Enki is now ready to proceed by boat to Nippur, where he will obtain Enlil's blessings for his newly built city and temple. He therefore rises from the abyss:)*

When Enki rises, the fish.... rise,  
The abyss stands in wonder,  
In the sea joy enters,  
Fear comes over the deep,  
Terror holds the exalted river,  
The Euphrates, the South Wind lifts it in waves.

*Enki seats himself in his boat and first arrives in Eridu itself. In Eridu, he slaughters many oxen and sheep before proceeding to Nippur. Upon his arrival, a feast is prepared for all gods and Enlil in special:*

Enki in the shrine Nippur,  
Gives his brother Enlil bread to eat,  
In the first place he seated Anu (*the Skyfather*),  
Next to Anu he seated Enlil,  
Nintu he seated at the big side,  
The Anunnaki seated themselves one after the other.  
Enlil says to the Anunnaki:  
" Ye great gods who are standing about,  
My brother has built a house, the king Enki;  
Eridu, like a mountain, he has raised up from the earth,  
In a good place he has built it.  
Eridu, the clean place, where none may enter,  
The house built of silver, adorned with lapis lazuli,  
The house directed by the seven lyre-songs given over to incantation,  
With pure songs....  
The abyss, the shrine of the goodness of Enki, befitting the divine decrees,  
Eridu, the pure house having been built,  
O Enki, praise!

# ENKI AND THE WORLD ORDER

Source: *Myths of Enki, The Crafty God* by Samuel Noah Kramer and Meier, John.

*The Enuma Elish, the Babylonian Creation myth, explains how natural phenomena and social institutions on Earth came into being and were regulated. In an earlier Sumerian source, however, the story is different - everything is established by the god Enki, the clever craftsman who presides over the life-giving fresh waters, the patron of crafts and arts, magic and wisdom.*

*In this myth, Enki blesses the cities of Nippur, "the place where the gods are born", Ur, Meluhha (in the Indus Valley) and Dilmun with abundant crops, flocks, precious metals and success in war. Then he organizes the sea, rivers, clouds and rain, turning the barren hills into fields and creating the rivers Tigris and Euphrates by filling their beds with a stream of his own semen. Enki also makes the sheep, cattle and crops multiply and establishes the skills of building and weaving.*

As he creates each domain, Enki appoints a god/dess to supervise it. When he has finished appointing the gods their domains, Inanna approaches Enki and complains to him that he had failed to give her a domain. Enki responds by listing numerous powers and domains possessed by Inanna, adding each time "Young Inanna, what more could we add for you?" Finally, Enki says to the Maiden goddess: **"Inanna, you have the power to destroy what cannot be destroyed, and to set up what cannot be set up"**.

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Lord who walks nobly on heaven and earth, self-reliant,  
father Enki, engendered by a bull,  
begotten by a wild bull,  
prized by Enlil, the Great Kur,  
loved by holy An,

king, who turned out the mes-tree in the Abzu,  
raised it up over all the lands,  
great usumgal,  
who planted it in Eridu -  
its shade spreading over heaven and earth -  
a grove of fruit trees stretching over the land.

Enki, lord of the hegals the Anunna-gods possess.  
Nudimmud, the mighty one of the Ekur,  
the strong one of An and Uras.  
Nudimmud, the mighty one of the Ekur,  
strong one of the Anunna,  
whose noble house set up in the Abzu is  
the mast of heaven and earth.

Enki, who, lifting but a single eye, convulses the Kur,  
where the bison is born,  
the stag is born,  
where the wild sheep is born,  
the stag is born  
in the...meadows,  
and the pits in the heart of the hursag  
in the verdant...  
the place where no one dares to enter,  
there you have fixed your eyes like a halhal-reed.

...

[a word from you] - and heaps and piles stack high with grain.  
[in the land] - be it fat -  
be it milk -  
the stalls and sheepfolds produce it.  
[the shepherd] sweetly sounds his ilulamma-song.  
[the cowherd] spends the day rocking the churn next to him.

You set out meals - the way it should be -  
in the dining halls of the gods.

Your word: the young man thrusts it in to strengthen the heart.  
He gores in the courtyard like an ox with thick horns.

Your word: the young woman sets it on her head as a lure.

The people in all the settled cities gaze at her in wonder.

Lords and rulers  
to thrill their hearts, to bring them joy.  
Enlil, the great Kur, has empowered you.

Enki, lord of the hegál  
lord of wisdom  
lord, beloved of An, ornament of Eridu,  
who directs commands and decisions,  
expert at fate-decreeing:

You have locked up...by day,  
you have made the month to enter its 'house'.

You bring down the stars of heaven,  
you have computed their number.

...you have given the people a place to live.  
...you have looked after them,  
you have made sure they follow their shepherd...

...you turned the weapons back into their 'houses'.

...you kept the people safe in their homes.

Father Enki, come close to the seeded land:  
let it bear healthy seed.

Nudimmud, come close to the pregnant ewe:  
let it give birth to a healthy lamb.

Come close to the inseminated cow:  
let it give birth to a healthy calf.

Come close to the pregnant goat:  
let it give birth to a healthy kid.

Once you come close to the cultivated field,  
the germinated fields,  
the heaps and piles stack high with grain  
in the high steppe.

Enki, king of the Abzu, celebrates his own magnificence -  
as is his right:

*My father, ruler above and below,  
made my features blaze above and below.*

*My great brother, ruler of all the lands,  
gathered all the me together,  
placed the me in my hands.  
From the Ekur, house of Enlil,  
I passed on the arts and crafts to my Abzu, Eridu.*

*I am the true offspring, sprung from the wild ox.  
I am a leading son of An.*

*I am the great storm the breaks over the 'Great Below':  
I am the great lord over the land.*

*I am the first among the rulers.  
I am the father of all the lands.  
I am the big brother of the gods,  
the hegäl is perfected in me.*

*I am the seal-keeper above and below.  
I am cunning and wise in the lands.*

*I am the one who directs justice alongside An, the king,  
on the dais of An.*

*I am the one who having gazed upon the Kur,  
decrees the fates alongside Enlil:*

*he has placed in my hands the decreeing of fates  
at the place where the sun rises.*

*I am the one Nintu really cares for:  
I am the one Ninhursag gave a good name.*

*I am the leader of the Anunna-gods.  
I am the one born a leading son of An.*

After the lord had proclaimed his loftiness,  
after the great prince had pronounced his own praise,  
the Anunna-gods stood up in prayer and supplication:

*Lord who stands watch over the arts and crafts,  
expert at decisions, adored one -  
'O Enki, praise.*

A second time, for the pleasure it gave him,  
Enki, king of the Abzu, celebrates his own magnificence -  
as it right:

*I am lord. I am the one whose word endures.  
I am eternal.*

*At my command stalls were built,  
sheepfolds ringed about:*

*When it approached the above,  
the hegäl rain poured down from above.*

*When it approached the below,  
there was a high carp-flood.*

*When it approached the green fields,  
the heaps and piles of grain stacked high at my word.*

*I built my house, the shrine, in a pure place,  
gave it a good name.*

*I built my Abzu, the shrine, in...  
decreed for it a good fate.*

*My house - its shade stretches over the snake-marsh.  
My house - there the suhurmas-fish wave their beards  
among the honey-plants,  
its gud-fish wave their tails for me*

*among the small gizi-reeds,  
its flock of birds keep chirping in their nests...*

*Sacred songs and spells filled my Abzu.*

*The magur-boat, the crown, the Ibex of the Abzu,  
brought me much joy in its midst:  
over the grand marsh, the place I have chosen,  
it swings its arms for me,  
it stretches its neck for me.*

*Faultlessly the oarsmen drew the oars.  
Sweet songs they sing, delighting the river.  
Nimgirsig, the ensi of the magur-boat  
holds the golden scepter for me,  
steers my boat - the Ibex of the Abzu - for me, Enki.*

*I - the lord - I will go.  
I am Enki,  
I will draw near to my land...*

*Let the lands Magan and Dilmun  
set eyes upon me - Enki.  
Let Dilmun boats be loaded with wood.  
Let the Magan boats be filled sky high.  
Let the magilum-boats of Meluhha  
transport gold and silver,  
let them take it to Nippur for Enlil,  
king of the lands.*

*To him who has no city,  
who has no house,  
the Martu - I furnish cattle as a gift.*

The great prince who had drawn near to his land,  
the Anunna-gods speak with affection:

*Lord who rides the great me,  
the pure me,  
who stands watch over the great me,  
the myriad me,  
who is foremost everywhere above and below,  
at Eridu, the pure place,  
the most precious place  
where the noble me have been taken in -  
'O Enki, lord above and below, praise!*

For the great prince who was passing through his land,  
all the lands, all the rulers,  
all the incantation-priests of Eridu  
the linen-wearers of Sumer,  
carry out the lustration rites of the Abzu,  
stand watch over the holy places,  
the precious places for father Enki,  
cleanse the great house of the prince,  
name its 'stations,'  
purify the noble shrine, the Abzu,  
carry into its midst the tall juniper,  
the pure plant,  
straighten the holy...  
the noble water-courses of father Enki,  
build with skill the staircase of Eridu at the good quay,  
moor the Ibex of the Abzu at the good quay,

the noble quay,  
set up the holy usga-shrine,  
gave voice in prayer after prayer there to him...

...

Proudly, the king stepped forth,  
father Enki came up to the land.  
Because the great prince came up to his land,  
hegal prevailed above and below.

Enki decrees its fate:

*Sumer, great Kur,  
mada of what is above and below,  
robed in enduring light,  
settling the me upon the people  
from sunrise to sunset,  
your me are lofty me,  
untouchable,  
your heart is a maze,  
inscrutable,  
your life-giving womb,  
the place where the gods give birth: like heaven  
it cannot be touched.  
It gives birth to kings who fasten the lasting diadem.  
It gives birth to the high priests who put crown to head.  
Your lord, the honored lord, sits with king An,  
on the dais of An.*

*Your king, the great Kur,  
father Enlil,  
the father of the lands,  
has blocked up the...like a verdant tree.*

*The Anunna-gods, the great gods,  
have taken up dwelling in your midst,  
consume their food in your giguna  
among your rare trees.*

*House, Sumer,  
have your many stalls built,  
have your cows multiply,  
have your many sheepfolds set up,  
have your sheep be many,  
have your giguna reach the sky,  
have your lasting shrine lift hand to heaven!*

He crossed to the shrine, Ur,  
Enki, king of the Abzu, decrees its fate:

*City with everything proper to it, water-washed,  
a firm-standing bull,  
a dais of plenty in the Kur, 'knees wide open,'  
lofty as a mountain  
hasur-grove, wide of shade  
counting on its own strength,  
you can well direct the me that have been perfected for you.  
Enlil, the Great Kur, has pronounced your lofty name  
above and below.  
City whose fate has been decreed by Enki,  
Shrine Ur, you can rise high to heaven.*



He crossed to the Kur Meluhha,  
Enki, the king of the Abzu, decrees its fate:

*Black Kur, your trees will be large trees,  
they will be me-groves of the Kur:  
their thrones will be set in royal palaces.*

*Your reeds will be large reeds,  
they will be reeds of the Kur:  
heroes work them as weapons in the battlefields.*

*Your bulls will be large bulls  
they be the bulls of the Kur:  
their roar will be the roar of the bulls of the Kur.*

*The great me of the gods will be perfected for you.*

*All the dar-birds of the Kur [wear] carnelian beards;  
your birds will be haia-birds;  
their cries will fill the royal palaces.*

*Your silver will be gold.  
Your copper will be bronze-tin.  
Kur, everything you have will [increase],  
your people will [multiply],  
your male will go after his fellow male like a bull.*

...

He cleanses and purified the kur-Dilmun,  
set Ninsikilla in charge of it.

Lagoons he allotted to the princely shrine.  
Dilmun eats its fish.

Palm trees he allotted to its fertile field.  
Dilmun eats their dates.

...Elam and Marhasi...  
...who are all devouring,  
The king, given power by Enlil  
attacked their houses, attacked their walls;  
their silver, lapis lazuli, and storehouses  
he brought to Nippur for Enlil, king of all the lands.

To him who had no city,  
who had no house,  
the Martu - Enki furnished cattle as a gift.

Once he had turned his eye away from that spot,  
once father Enki had raised it over the Euphrates,  
he stood up full of lust like an attacking bull,  
lifted his penis, ejaculates -  
he filled the Tigris with flowing water.

A wild cow mooing for its young in the pastures,  
the scorpion-infested stall,  
the Tigris clung to his side as to an attacking bull.

He lifted his penis, brought the bridal gifts -  
like a big wild bull he thrilled the heart of the Tigris,  
stood by as it gave birth.

The water he brought is flowing water,  
its 'wine' is sweet.  
The grain he brought is gunu-grain,  
the people eat it.

The Ekur, the house of Enlil, he packed with goods.  
With Enki, Enlil rejoiced,  
Nippur exulted.

The lord fastened on the diadem of the en,  
put on the enduring tiara of the king,  
trod the ground on his left side:  
hegal sprang out of the earth for him.

The one who holds a scepter in his right hand,  
who to make the Tigris and Euphrates 'eat together,'  
speaks words with an exulting mouth,  
who carried away prosperity from the palace like fat,  
the lord who decrees the fates,  
Enki, king of the Abzu,  
Enbilulu, the inspector of canals,  
Enki placed in charge of them.

He called the marshland:  
stocked it with suhurhi and suhur-fish.  
He called the canebrake:  
stocked it with full-grown reeds and green reeds...

The one from whose net no fish escapes,  
from whose trap no...escapes,  
from whose snare no bird escapes,  
...the son of...  
...loved by the fish,  
Enki placed in charge of them.

A shrine erected:  
a holy shrine it is, its interior is like a maze;  
a shrine whose interior is a twisted thread,  
a thing unknown to man,  
a shrine whose lower station is the roving iku-constellation,  
a holy shrine whose upper station moves toward the chariot-constellation,  
a turbulent flood-wave...  
its melam is awesome.

The Anunna-gods, the great gods, dare not go near it.

He sets up...  
the palace rejoiced.

The Anunna-gods stood before him in prayer and suppliance;  
for Enki, they set up a lofty dais in the Sea-House,  
for the lord...  
the great prince...  
the u-bird...

The Ekur, the house of Enlil, he packed with goods.  
With Enki Enlil rejoiced,  
Nippur exulted.

The one who sets sail...  
in the holy shrine,  
the innin who induces copulation...  
great flood-wave of the sea,  
turbulent flood-wave,  
the inundation of the sea...  
who springs forth out of the sea-foam...

the innin of Sirara,  
mother Nanse,  
the sea in all its breadth,  
Enki placed in charge of it.

He called the rain,  
the waters above,  
fixed them there as floating clouds,  
drives to the horizon their breath of life,  
turns the hillock into fields where emmer [grows].

The one who rides the great storm,  
who charges with lightening,  
who, with the holy bolt blocks up the inside of heaven,  
son of An,  
the canal-inspector of heaven and earth.  
Iskur, the man of abundance,  
the son of An,  
Enki placed in charge of it.

Enki trained the plow, the yoke, and the team,  
great prince Enki furnished them with oxen that...  
he opened the mouth of the holy furrow,  
made grow the grain in the seeded field.

The lord who fastened on the diadem,  
the ornament of the high steppe,

the tool expert  
farmer of Enlil,  
Enkimdu, the man of ditch and dike,  
Enki placed in charge of them.

The lord called the seeded field,  
stocked it with gunu-barley;

Enki stocked it with chick-peas, with lentils, with...  
heaped up in piles the estub-barley,  
the gunu-barley,  
the innuha-barley,  
Enki multiplied the heaps and piles of grain;  
with Enlil he spreads hegal through the land.

The one whose head and body are dappled,  
whose face drips honey,  
innin, she  
who breeds copulation,  
vigor of the land,  
the life of the Black Heads,  
Asnan, the good bread,  
bread of all the earth,  
Enki placed in charge of it.

The great prince placed a string on the pickax,  
guided the brickmold,  
made it penetrate mother-earth as if it were precious oil.

The one whose pronged pickax is a corpse-devouring snake  
that...  
whose firmly set brickmold is a ...  
that sets the...straight.  
Kulla, mighty brickman of the land,  
Enki placed in charge of them.

He fixed the cords, straightened the footers,  
erected a house at the side of the assembly,

guided the lustrations.  
The great prince set down the footers,  
fitted the brickwork upon them.

The one whose footers once laid down do not sag,  
whose lasting house once built does not collapse,  
whose vault reaches to mid-sky like a rainbow,  
MUSDAMMA, great builder of ENLIL,  
ENKI placed in charge of them.

He gave the lofty steppe a holy crown to wear.  
To the high steppe he tied a lapis lazuli beard,  
fastened on it a lapis diadem.

The good earth he lavished with teeming vegetation.  
He multiplied the herd of the high steppe,  
placed them where they are supposed to be.  
He multiplied the rams and the wild rams in the pastures,  
made them breed.

The hero who is the crown of the high steppe,  
the king of the steppe,  
great lion of the high steppe,  
powerful,  
the lofty hand of ENLIL,  
SUMUGAN, king of the hursag,  
ENKI placed in charge of them.

He built stalls, directed cleaning of them.  
He raised the sheepfolds,  
stocked them with the best fat and milk.  
He filled the dining halls of the gods with luxury.  
In the verdant steppe he dispensed hegál.

The king,  
the unfailing provider of Eanna,  
friend of AN,  
the beloved son-in-law of valiant SIN,  
the spouse of holy INANNA-  
the innin,  
queen of all the great me,  
who fosters copulation in the boulevards of KULLAB-  
DUMUZI, the usumgal of heaven,  
friend of AN,  
ENKI placed in charge of them.

The Ekur, the house of ENLIL, he packed with goods.  
With ENKI, ENLIL rejoiced, NIPPUR exulted.

He fixed the borders,  
marked them off.  
ENKI, for the ANUNNA-gods,  
erected the kiurua alongside the city,  
set down fields and farms alongside.

The hero, the bull who bursts out of the hasur-forest,  
who roars like a lion,  
the valiant Utu, the firm-standing bull  
who proudly emblazons his power,  
father of the great city,  
the place where the sun rises,  
the great herald of holy AN,  
the judge, the one who makes decisions for the gods,  
who has tied a beard of lapis lazuli,  
who blazes out in holy heaven  
out of the horizon,

Utu, son of Ningal,  
Enki placed in charge of the universe in its entirety.

He wove the mug-cloth,  
guided the te,  
Enki perfected the woman's art.  
For Enki the people...the...garment.

The one who is the dignity of the palace,  
the decorum of the king,  
Uttu, the unfailing woman of silence,  
Enki placed in charge of them.

Then the one who had been left without a single post,  
the...woman, the young Inanna,  
who had been left without a single post,  
Inanna to Enki, her father,  
entered his house,  
wept,  
muttered a complaint.

Of the Anunna-the great gods-their fate  
Enlil fixed for certain in your hand..

Me, the woman, why did you treat in a different way?  
I, the holy Inanna: where are my functions?

*Aruru, sister of Enlil,  
Nintu, queen of birth-giving,  
she got the holy brick of birth-giving  
for her en-ship,  
and carried off her umbilical-cord lancet,  
the imman-stone,  
leeks,  
she got the silagarra-vessel of greenish lapis lazuli,  
and carried off her holy consecrated ala-vessel,  
is now the mid-wife of the land.  
The birth of kings,  
the birth of en's has been put in her hands.*

*My noble sister, the holy Ninisinna  
got the suba-jewel,  
is now the lover of An,  
inciting the heart's desires.*

*My noble sister, the holy Ninmug,  
the golden chisel,  
the silver hammer,  
the large flint knife,  
her antasurra, has carried off,  
is now the metal/wood-worker of the land.  
Fastening the lasting diadem on the one born king,  
placing the crown on the head of the one born en,  
have been put in her hands.*

*My noble sister, the holy Nidaba,  
got the measuring rod,  
and tied about her arm the lapis measuring line,  
proclaims all the great me,  
fixes the borders,  
marks off the boundaries,  
is now the scribe of the land.  
Feeding the gods has been put in her hand.*

*Nanse, the noble nin/en,*

*at whose feet the holy u-bird stands,  
is now the customs inspector of the sea.  
Good fish, tasty birds,  
she grants her father Enlil in Nippur.*

*Me, the woman, why did you treat in a different way?  
I, the holy Inanna: where are my functions?*

Enki answers his daughter, the holy Inanna:

*What did I keep from you?  
Innin, what did I keep from you?  
What more could we add to you?*

*Young Inanna, what did I keep from you?  
What more could we add to you?*

*You proclaim the ...  
the...has been adorned for you as a ...*

*You put on there the garment 'the strength of the young man.'  
You introduced the words of the young man,  
spoken words.*

*You were put in charge of the crook,  
the staff,  
the wand of shepherdship.*

*Young Inanna, what did I keep from you?  
What more could we add to you?*

*You interpret the oracular omens of battles and combats.  
You are no raven,  
but you recite the ill-omened words in their midst.  
You have twisted there the straight thread.  
Young Inanna, you have straightened there the twisted thread.*

*You put on a garment there,  
you dressed yourself in linen there,  
you wove the mug-cloth there,  
you threaded the spindle there.  
In your...you dyed the multi-colored...thread.*

*Inanna, you have heaped up heads like dust,  
you have cast heads about like seeds.  
Inanna, you have destroyed what cannot be destroyed;  
you have conceived the inconceivable.*

*You have removed the cloth from the sem of lamentations.  
Young Inanna, you have turned the tigi and the adab  
back to their 'houses.'*

*You who do not weary the eye of your suitors.  
Young Inanna, you who know nothing of fastening  
the ropes of distant wells.  
Now has the heart of Enlil overflowed its banks,  
he has restored it to its place.  
The heart overflowing its banks for humankind,  
do not set up...*

...  
May...may he/they...

...  
'O father Enki, praise!

# ENKI AND NINMAH

Source: Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G., [The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature](#), Oxford 1998-.

*Creation was seen by the Sumerians as an act of skilled craftsmanship. In this myth, Enki, the patron of all arts and crafts, the god of the sweet fertilising waters of the deep, wisdom and magic, is challenged to a creature-making contest by Ninmah, another name for Ninhursag, the Great Mother goddess and Enki's feisty beloved.*

*Everything starts in the old dyas, when the gods were forced to work hard excavating irrigation canals. The senior gods did the digging while the younger carried the baskets of earth, a heavy task indeed. Then, to relieve the gods of their workload, urged by the primeval Mother Nammu the Sea, Enki, the creator of forms, aided by Nammu and Ninmah created the first humans. The moment humankind was created, a bond between humans and the gods was sealed, to last forever after.*

*Thus, after the task of creating humans had been completed, Enki held a feast to celebrate the newfound leisure of the gods, who praised Enki for his accomplishment. As the feast progressed, Enki and Ninmah overindulged and drank too much. Ninmah said to Enki that She could make humans all by herself and give them a good or bad fate. Enki immediately replied, bitten, that whatever kind of human Ninmah created, he could turn to advantage the fate Ninmah bestowed upon him or her.*

*Ninmah set up to create the first humans by herself alone, and perhaps because of the limited assistance she had, the beings created were creatures with serious defects. Yet despite their handicaps, Enki was able to find a useful role for each of them. When Ninmah made a man unable to stretch out his hands and grasp things, Enki made him a servant of the king because he would not be able to steal. The second man, who turned out to be blind, Enki gave him the gift of making music so that he could serve the king. The third being created belongs to a broken text, so he could not be identified. The fourth creation was a man who could not hold his semen, and Enki was able to cure him by giving him a purifying bath. The fifth creature was a barren woman,, and she was put in a harem. The 6th being was a sexless creature, who was also put at service of the king.*

*Having outdone Ninmah, Enki had to challenge Her and he procured unfortunate beings to test her abilities. His first creature was a woman with difficulties in giving birth. Ninmah's powers were not sufficient to reverse her fate. The second being was an old man who suffered from the heart, lungs and bowels, and was so afflicted that he could not speak up or understand the Great Goddess. Frustrated, Ninmah complained that he was neither alive nor dead, so she could do nothing to improve his condition. Thus, part of humanity from this day on may come to the world with defects, having to endure such suffering, and the only way to regeneration is to pray for the gods. The myth finishes with a praise for Enki.*

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1-11 In those days, in the days when heaven and earth were created; in those nights, in the nights when heaven and earth were created; in those years, in the years when the fates were determined; when the Anuna gods were born; when the goddesses were taken in marriage; when the goddesses were distributed in heaven and earth; when the goddesses ..... became pregnant and gave birth; when the gods were obliged (?) ..... their food ..... for their meals; the senior gods oversaw the work, while the minor gods were bearing the toil. The gods were digging the canals and piling up the silt in Harali. The gods, dredging the clay, began complaining about this life.

12-23 At that time, the one of great wisdom, the creator of all the senior gods, Enki lay on his bed, not waking up from his sleep, in the deep engur, in the flowing water, the place the inside of which no other god knows. The gods said, weeping: "He is the cause of the lamenting!" Namma, the primeval mother who gave birth to the senior gods, took the tears of the gods to the one who lay sleeping, to the one who did not wake up from his bed, to her son: "Are you really lying there asleep, and ..... not awake? The gods, your creatures, are smashing their ..... My son, wake up from your bed! Please apply the skill deriving from your wisdom and create a substitute (?) for the gods so that they can be freed from their toil!"

24-37 At the word of his mother Namma, Enki rose up from his bed. In Hal-an-kug, his room for pondering, he slapped his thigh in annoyance. The wise and intelligent one, the prudent, ..... of skills, the fashioner of the design of everything brought to life birth-goddesses (?). Enki reached out his arm over them and turned his attention to them. And after Enki, the fashioner of designs by himself, had pondered the matter, he said to his mother Namma: "My mother, the creature you planned will really come into existence. Impose on him the work of carrying baskets. You should knead clay from the top of the abzu; the birth-goddesses (?) will nip off the clay and you shall bring the form into existence. Let Ninmah act as your assistant; and let Ninimma, Cu-zi-ana, Ninmada, Ninbarag, Ninmug, ..... and Ninguna stand by as you give birth. My mother, after you have decreed his fate, let Ninmah impose on him the work of carrying baskets."

*6 lines fragmentary*

44-51 Enki ..... brought joy to their heart. He set a feast for his mother Namma and for Ninmah. All the princely birth-goddesses (?) ..... ate delicate reed (?) and bread. An, Enlil, and the lord Nudimmud roasted holy kids. All the senior gods praised him: "O lord of wide understanding, who is as wise as you? Enki, the great lord, who can equal your actions? Like a corporeal father, you are the one who has the me of deciding destinies, in fact you are the me."

52-55 Enki and Ninmah drank beer, their hearts became elated, and then Ninmah said to Enki: "Man's body can be either good or bad and whether I make a fate good or bad depends on my will."

56-61 Enki answered Ninmah: "I will counterbalance whatever fate -- good or bad -- you happen to decide." Ninmah took clay from the top of the abzu in her hand and she fashioned from it first a man who could not bend his outstretched weak hands. Enki looked at the man who could not bend his outstretched weak hands, and decreed his fate: he appointed him as a servant of the king.

62-65 Second, she fashioned one who turned back (?) the light, a man with constantly opened eyes (?). Enki looked at the one who turned back (?) the light, the man with constantly opened eyes (?), and decreed his fate allotting to it the musical arts, making him as the chief ..... in the king's presence.

66-68 Third, she fashioned one with both feet broken, one with paralysed feet. Enki looked at the one with both feet broken, the one with paralysed feet and ..... him for the work of ..... and the silversmith and ..... ( 1 ms. has instead: *She fashioned one, a third one, born as an idiot. Enki looked at this one, the one born as an idiot, and decreed his fate: he appointed him as a servant of the king.*)

69-71 Fourth, she fashioned one who could not hold back his urine. Enki looked at the one who could not hold back his urine and bathed him in enchanted water and drove out the namtar demon from his body.

72-74 Fifth, she fashioned a woman who could not give birth. Enki looked at the woman who could not give birth, and decreed her fate: he made (?) her belong to the queen's household. ( 1 ms. has instead: ..... as a weaver, fashioned her to belong to the queen's household.)

75-78 Sixth, she fashioned one with neither penis nor vagina on its body. Enki looked at the one with neither penis nor vagina on its body and give it the name "Nibru eunuch (?)", and decreed as its fate to stand before the king.

79-82 Ninmah threw the pinched-off clay from her hand on the ground and a great silence fell. The great lord Enki said to Ninmah: "I have decreed the fates of your creatures and given them their daily bread. Come, now I will fashion somebody for you, and you must decree the fate of the newborn one!"

83-91 Enki devised a shape with head, ..... and mouth in its middle, and said to Ninmah: "Pour ejaculated semen into a woman's womb, and the woman will give birth to the semen of her womb." Ninmah stood by for the newborn ..... and the woman brought forth ..... in the midst ..... In return (?), this was Umul: its head was afflicted, its place of ..... was afflicted, its eyes were afflicted, its neck was afflicted. It could hardly breathe, its ribs were shaky, its lungs were afflicted, its heart was afflicted, its bowels were afflicted. With its hand and its lolling head it could not not put bread into its mouth; its spine and head were dislocated. The weak hips and the shaky feet could not carry (?) it on the field -- Enki fashioned it in this way.

92-101 Enki said to Ninmah: "For your creatures I have decreed a fate, I have given them their daily bread. Now, you should decree a fate for my creature, give him his daily bread too." Ninmah looked at Umul and turned to him. She went nearer to Umul asked him questions but he could not speak. She offered him bread to eat but he could not reach out for it. He could not lie on ....., he could not ..... Standing up he could not sit down, could not lie down, he could not ..... a house, he could not eat bread. Ninmah answered Enki: "The man you have fashioned is neither alive nor dead. He cannot support himself (?)."



102-111 Enki answered Ninmah: "I decreed a fate for the first man with the weak hands, I gave him bread. I decreed a fate for the man who turned back (?) the light, I gave him bread. I decreed a fate for the man with broken, paralysed feet, I gave him bread. I decreed a fate for the man who could not hold back his urine, I gave him bread. I decreed a fate for the woman who could not give birth, I gave her bread. I decreed the fate for the one with neither penis nor vagina on its body, I gave it bread. My sister, ....." *2 lines fragmentary*

112-121 Ninmah answered Enki:  
*9 lines fragmentary*

122-128 (*Ninmah's answer continues*) "You (?) entered ..... Look, you do not dwell in heaven, you do not dwell on earth, you do not come out to look at the Land. Where you do not dwell but where my house is built, your words cannot be heard. Where you do not live but where my city is built, I myself am silenced (?). My city is ruined, my house is destroyed, my child has been taken captive. I am a fugitive who has had to leave the E-kur, even I myself could not escape from your hand."

129-139 Enki replied to Ninmah: "Who could change the words that left your mouth? Remove Umul from your lap ..... Ninmah, may your work be ....., you ..... for me what is imperfect; who can oppose (?) this? The man whom I shaped ..... after you ....., let him pray! Today let my penis be praised, may your wisdom be confirmed (!)! May the enkum and ninkum ..... proclaim your glory ..... My sister, the heroic strength ..... The song ..... the writing (?) ..... The gods who heard ..... let Umul build (?) my house ....."

140-141 Ninmah could not rival the great lord Enki. Father Enki, your praise is sweet!

# THE ERIDU GENESIS

From "[The Harps That Once...: Sumerian Poetry in Translation](#)" by Thorkild Jacobsen. Yale University Press, Publishers; Copyright 1987.

Nintur was paying attention:

*Let me bethink myself of my humankind,  
all forgotten as they are;  
and mindful of mine,  
Nintur's creatures let me bring them back  
let me lead the people back from their trails.*

*May they come and build cities and cult places,  
that I may cool myself in their shade;  
may they lay the bricks for the cult cities in pure spots  
and may they found places for divination in pure spots!*

She gave directions for purification and cries for elemency,  
the things that cool divine wrath,  
perfected the divine service and the august offices,  
said to the surrounding regions: "Let me institute peace there!"  
When An, Enlil, Enki and Ninhursaga  
fashioned the dark-headed people  
they had made the small animals that come up from out of the earth,  
come from the earth in abundance  
and had let there be, as it befits it, gazelles  
wild donkeys, and four-footed beasts in the desert.

...  
...and let me have him advise;  
let me have him oversee their labor,  
and let him teach the nation to follow along  
unerringly like cattle!

When the royal scepter was coming down from heaven,  
the august crown and the royal throne being already  
down from heaven,  
he (the king) regularly performed to perfection  
the august divine services and offices,  
laid the bricks of those cities in pure spots.  
They were named by name and allotted half-bushel baskets.

The firstling of those cities, Eridu,  
she gave to the leader Nudimmud,  
the second, Bad-Tibira, she gave to the prince and the sacred one,  
the third, Larak, she gave to Pabilsag,  
the fourth, Sippar, she gave to the gallant Utu.  
The fifth, Shuruppak, she gave to Ansud.

These cities, which had been named by names,  
and had been allotted half-bushel baskets,  
dredged the canals, which were blocked with purplish  
wind-borne clay, and they carried water.  
Their cleaning of the smaller canals  
established abundant growth.

[lost account of the antediluvian rulers, and how human noise vexed the chief god Enlil so much that he  
persuaded the divine assembly to vote the destruction of man by the deluge] ...  
That day Nintur wept over her creatures  
and holy Inanna was full of grief over their people;  
but Enki took counsel with his own heart.

An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninhursaga  
had the gods of heaven and earth swear  
by the names of An and Enlil.

At that time, Ziusudra was king  
and lustration priest.  
He fashioned, being a seer, the god of giddiness  
and stood in awe beside it, wording his wishes humbly.

As he stood there regularly day after day  
something that was not a dream was appearing:  
conversation  
a swearing of oaths by heaven and earth,  
a touching of throats  
and the gods bringing their thwarts up to Kiur.

And as Ziusudra stood there beside it, he went on hearing:

*Step up to the wall to my left and listen!  
Let me speak a word to you at the wall  
and may you grasp what I say,  
may you heed my advice!  
By our hand a flood will sweep over  
the cities of the half-bushel baskets, and the country;  
the decision, that mankind is to be destroyed  
has been made.  
A verdict, a command of the assembly cannot be revoked,  
an order of An and Enlil is not known  
ever to have been countermanded,  
their kingship, their term, has been uprooted  
they must bethink themselves of that.  
Now...  
What I have to say to you...*  
...

[lost account of Enki's advice to build a boat and load it with pairs of living things, and Ziusudra's compliance]  
All the evil winds, all stormy winds gathered into one  
and with them, then, the flood was sweeping over the cities of  
the half-bushel baskets  
for seven days and seven nights.  
After the flood had swept over the country,  
after the evil wind had tossed the big boat  
about on the great waters,  
the sun came out spreading light  
over heaven and earth.

Ziusudra then drilled an opening in the big boat.  
And the gallant Utu sent his light  
into the interior of the big boat.  
Ziusudra, being king,  
stepped up before Utu kissing the ground  
before him.  
The king was butchering oxen,  
was being lavish with the sheep  
Barley cakes, crescents together with...  
...he was crumbling for him  
juniper, the pure plant of the  
mountains, he filled on the fire  
and with a ...clasped to  
the breast he...

[lost account of Enlil's wrath at finding survivor's and his mollification by Enki]

*You here have sworn  
by the life's breath of heaven*

*the life's breath of earth  
that he verily is allied with yourself;  
you there, An and Enlil,  
have sworn by the life's breath of heaven,  
the life's breath of earth.  
that he is allied with all of you.  
He will disembark the small animals  
that come up from the earth!*

Ziusudra, being king,  
stepped up before An and Enlil  
kissing the ground.  
And An and Enlil after honoring him  
were granting him life like a god's,  
were making lasting breath of life, like a god's,  
descend into him.  
That day they made Ziusudra,  
preserver, as king, of the name of the small  
animals and the seed of mankind,  
live toward the east over the mountains  
in mount Dilmun.